

THE

# HISTORIAN

MEMBERSHIP DUES  
ENVELOPES FOR 2000  
ARE INCLUDED IN THIS  
ISSUE

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OF HANCOCK COUNTY

Bay Saint Louis, Mississippi

November 1999

## NOVEMBER HAPPENINGS

The November meeting of the Hancock County Historical Society will be held at noon on Thursday, November 18 at the Kate Lobrano House, 108 Cue Street, Bay Saint Louis, Mississippi.

We have a very special speaker for this meeting, Val Husley, retiring curator of the Maritime and Seafood Museum in Biloxi.

This will be a rare opportunity to learn about "The Boats of 1699." We have heard much during the Tercentenary about *Le Marin* and *La Badine*, Iberville's and Bienville's ships respectively, but have learned little about smaller support or convenience vessels of the period.

Call 467-4090 for reservations at \$6.00. Please call early to help us plan food and seating. Thank you.

## ELECTION OF BOARD OF DIRECTORS TO BE HELD

Members present at the November meeting will elect four members to the Society's Board of Directors. At that time, nominations from the floor will be accepted to join those nominated by the President's nominating committee. The names proposed by the committee are:

President, Brehm Bell  
2nd Vice Pres., Marine Collins  
Secretary, Ruth Carlson  
Historian, Charles Gray

Continued on page 3



JOHN LAW AS DON QUIXOTE.

This hostile cartoon was published after the failure of his scheme and the discrediting of paper money

## THE FRENCH COLONY AFTER 1699

*It seems fitting after our recent celebration of the 300th birthday of Bay St. Louis to ask the "Whither?" question.*

*The French crown sent its explorers to find the entrance to the Mississippi River and to create settlements of Frenchmen in the region. While D'Iberville and his cohorts, including his brother, D'Bienville, achieved the former, establishing permanent settlements was no easy task.*

*Bienville named our town and sent a sergeant and 15 men to live here at the end of 1699. What happened to the men and the*

*"casquette" girls brought from France as wives in the masculine enclaves of the French forts?*

*The following excerpts from Scharff's excellent history\* of Hancock County offer the clearest picture available of the plight of the early settlers.*

*Edith Back*

The French government never had any serious interest in colonizing

\*Scharff, Robert G., *LOUISIANA'S LOSS, MISSISSIPPI'S GAIN, A History of Hancock County, Mississippi*, Brunswick Publishing Co., Lawrenceville, Virginia, 1999.



Louisiana or in creating an overseas empire. Their main interest in the New World was, narrowly, to help pay the huge expenses incurred in their incessant warfare with other European powers by exploiting the wealth of this land which they perceived mainly to be in the form of mineral wealth such as Spain had found in South and Central America.

The French treasury was already badly depleted when LaSalle, after exploring the Mississippi in 1682 was allowed to establish at his own expense a colony with himself in charge. France's financial situation continued to deteriorate so badly that the government could do little to sustain the colony, causing thousands of colonists to perish from starvation. Thousands were sent over from Europe, but once here, not only were the colonists strictly on their own but they also had to live under strict laws and regulations that reserved all trade and profits to the government.

The cost of administering the Louisiana colony, even under these monopolistic conditions became so taxing that the government finally sought someone to take it off their hands. In 1712 the French government awarded the proprietorship of all Louisiana to Antoine Crozat for 14 years. He was to run it as a private monopoly with exclusive rights of trade, working the mines and owning forever all the lands he would improve by cultivation, all the buildings he would erect and all the manufactures he could establish. In exchange, Crozat agreed to give one fourth the output of the mines to the king, to send two shiploads of colonists every year, and after nine years to assume all expenses of the colony, including military costs.

Crozat's approach was to exploit the known riches of the land: furs, pearls, minerals, timber, etc. Crozat failed in the search for mines or precious metals. The pearls found were of terribly inferior quality. Attempts to trade with the Spanish were unsuccessful and exclusive trade between France and Louisiana failed because the impoverished colonists had little to trade. Crozat was released

from his contract on Aug. 23, 1727. Two weeks later the French Royal Bank chartered the Company of the West under the directorship of John Law, a "con-man" from Scotland.

### THE ROYAL BANK

Law was more interested in expanding the bank's possessions than in improving them. He induced the government to combine and transfer privileges, possessions and effects of all French trading companies into a new company that he formed, attached to the Royal Bank.

The French had learned from Crozat's failure that it was essential to encourage agriculture so that the colonists would be able to feed themselves and produce something to exchange for the merchandise sent to sell to them. The Company was therefore obligated to develop agriculture in the colony, and to accomplish this by allotting land to anyone - except Protestants and Jews - who would improve it. The company also offered to sell the landholders slaves (who were first imported in 1718) and the necessary supplies for improving their land.

The colonists were still permitted only to buy from and sell to the company. They were also prohibited from cultivating crops that might compete with French products such as wine, hemp, flax, etc.

The Mississippi Company concluded that the best way to encourage agriculture was to make large grants of land to persons of wealth and importance and to trust them to make such concessions in various parts of the territory. The sale of these concessions to wealthy Parisians began toward the end of 1719.

Although most of these concessions were located on the Mississippi River, the size of those on the Mississippi Gulf Coast was enormous. Madame Chaumont received two concessions on the Pascagoula River, while "all the lands bordering the waters of the Bay of St. Louis" were granted in 1720 to a Madame Mazieres. This concession

consisted of 17,084 acres located north of the present-day Felicity Street.

These large concessions required many people to operate, and grantees were required to transport a number of settlers. In this way, the Company expected to introduce six thousand Europeans into the colony. Grantees encouraged Frenchmen to go to the colony by means of every inducement; when this wasn't enough, they lied to them concerning the benefits of going there. And when this didn't suffice they kidnapped the needed people.

### SETTLERS ARRIVE FOLLOWED BY SLAVES

On January 3, 1721, the ships *La Girode* and *La Voltage* arrived at Ship Island with 300 settlers aboard for the concession of Mme. Mazieres at the Bay of St. Louis, Mme. Chaumont on the Pascagoula, and M. des Marché on the Mississippi. Altogether, a total of about 1300 people, including 250 women and 180 children, were sent to these three concessionaires.

Although they were transported to the concessions, little, in practice, was obtained from the labor of the settlers. Recruiters in France sent Parisians, not farmers, and the settlers starved. Many died from disease, some deserted. The need to acquire cultivators was apparent, however, so thousands of blacks were brought over from Africa and from the West Indies.

Moreover these grantees were wealthy men and women who lived well; they had no incentive to brave the terrors of a long sea voyage or endure the privations of the wilds of Louisiana. They therefore, were content to send large numbers of ignorant peasants to cultivate the American estates under the management of agents, many of whom were indolent, incapable, and faithless. The result was a lamentable failure.

Without a leader, the settlers are likely to have just drifted away to other places, especially after two hurricanes a month apart in late 1722.

On May 23, 1723, a Royal Proclamation announced the failure of Law's bank. The Bank of France had failed, along with John Law and his financial enterprises. Its notes became



absolute worthless, thus ruining an immense number of individuals.

### THE COAST ABANDONED

The Company's headquarters - in effect, the capitol of Louisiana - was moved to New Orleans at the beginning of August 1723. After this, Biloxi and the coast became known as the Third Military District.

A terrible hurricane occurred in September 1723. It destroyed houses, boats, food, warehouses and all the crops that had been planted, and also claimed the lives of many people. Most of the remaining colonists left the coast to live on the Mississippi River.

The multiple afflictions of 1722 - 23 - three hurricanes, a failure of the Royal Bank and moving the capitol to New Orleans - dealt the coast a knockout blow, and marked the beginning of a long dark period, from which it didn't emerge for almost 100 years.

During the next 75 years, the coast was thinly populated. From the records of the Church of the Immaculate Conception in Mobile, we learn that small groups of people were centered during the next 12 - 15 years at Waveland, and east point of the Bay of St. Louis (Henderson Point), Cat Island and Ship Island. A few settlers were also scattered through the woods and along the rivers and bays.

In 1729, the military outpost at Biloxi was totally abandoned. The few settlers remaining on the coast were now almost completely on their own. The coast was soon reclaimed by wilderness.

France's ability to maintain Louisiana came to an end and she feared that it would be taken by the English. Therefore, on September 3, 1762, under a secret treaty, France gave to Spain all of the territory west of the Mississippi, plus New Orleans and the territory surrounding it. It was an absolute gift and no payment and no conditions were attached.

### ELECTION from page 1

Those remaining in office for the second year of their term are:

2nd Vice Pres., Ames Kergosien  
and Roland Schexnayder  
Treasurer, Meg Hilliker  
Membership, Marlene Johnson  
Publicity, Edith Back

### PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

The message that the president would very much like to convey to you is "THANK YOU". The cemetery tour was once again a great success. Not only did we exceed last year's donations (\$767.00 this year compared to \$730.00 last year) but we had the most volunteers helping that we have ever had.

We were able to restore 36 broken stones and clean numerous others with last years proceeds and expect to match or exceed that number with this money. We greatly appreciate your support each year with this very worthwhile project.

The cookie and candy donations were exceedingly generous and compulsively delicious.

Meg Hilliker directed this year's presentation. She researched each of the people who were depicted and choose their portrayers. It was superbly done.

Mrs. Dan (Joan) Seal was portrayed by Rebecca Beckmeyer.

Powhattan Robertson was portrayed by Margaret Hadden.

Nathaniel Luther was portrayed by Gary Taylor.

Virginia Chapman was portrayed by Marry Winnard.

R. W. Webb was portrayed by Delma Powell.

The Osbourne family were represented by Mary Catherine Moran.

Dr. Cyrus Shipp was portrayed by David Burns.

Wilhemenia Moon was portrayed by Meg Hilliker.

Charles Marshall was portrayed by Donald Mauffrey

Cora and Ellen Gray were represented by Mary Howard

George Arbo was portrayed by Arthur Bailey.

Participating in the Sunday afternoon

set-up for the tour were Richard Johnson, Brehm Bell, Gaines Kergosien, John Waterman, Carroll Gordon and Lynn Cucullu.

Hostesses at Loblano House were Marlene Johnson, Patt Cucullu (as Kate Loblano), Ruth Thompson, Ruth Chambers, Jeanette Ogden, Kay Lang, Mary Lou Cucullu, Edith Back and Evie Gordon. Dorothea Martin assumed her usual post at the cemetery entrance as "The Nearly Departed," a recurring character for the last seven years. Dorothy is also keeper of the donations basket at the tour entrance.

Serving as guides were, Irwin Cucullu who was coordinator for the guides, Margaret Hadden, Ruth Carlson, Melinda and Jack Richard, Chuck and Jerry Ingraham, Linda Bynum, Janet Dudding and James Kaihatu, JoAnn and Rick George, Jim and Linda Henrie, Dottie Hodges, Dana Piazza and John Waterman.

Food donors were far too numerous to name, but thank you each and every one. The abundance of food and the large number of guides made this the best tour we have ever had.

Charles Gray

### LOBRANO HOUSE HOURS

|         |        |
|---------|--------|
| MONDAY  | 8 a.m. |
| through | to     |
| FRIDAY  | 4 p.m. |

### THE

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### HANCOCK COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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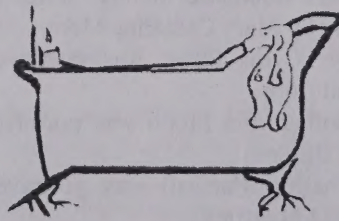
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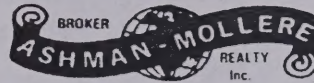
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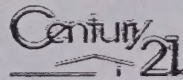
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
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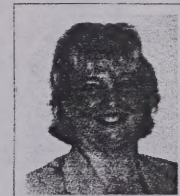
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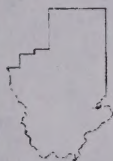
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